Strategies for success for boomwhackers, students with special needs and everyone else, too! ☺

\*Start with a familiar song. I like to start with “Mary Had a Little Lamb” with only the letter names written out and colored. Then, point at the letter names as the students play their color. The paper looks something like this:

E D C D E E E-

D D D E G G

E D C D E E E E

D D E D C---

\*Safety in numbers—put students who are having difficulty in a group that has at least one strong leader in it. If that student leader is also a kind helper, then they can provide support to the struggling ones. Or, if your students come with a TA that seems like they are understanding the boomwhacker songs, then the TA can be grouped with the struggling students. I have experienced situations where some of the students that the TA is there to support will be in her group, along with some self selected students who need the support, while some of the students with special needs are comfortable in the mix of the rest of the students. It depends on the student and the situation.

\*Point at letter names while students are learning. Be aware of your body blocking the students view, or of your body being in the way of the light from the projector.

\*Have students practice singing letter names as they are learning the song. They can continue this even as they become familiar with it. This provides support to the students with special needs who may have difficulty following the sheet music, and it provides the repetition that they likely need. This is especially helpful when the students are playing a different part than the melody.

\*Provide supports when students are reading sheet music. Write in letter names above or below the staff. Consider color coding the sheet music to match the boomwhackers. I would photocopy the music, add in letter names, and then color lightly over each letter to match the boomwhackers. Then, I would project the image on the SMART board and point to the music as the students practiced.

\*Honor students choices—when you can, and if it will help ensure success. For example, I had a student with autism in my 2/3 boomwhacker elective. There was one particular song that he REALLY excelled in getting the low C part correct on. When we would rotate groups (to different colors) he would try, but he wasn’t successful. So, since it didn’t distract the others, we allowed him to stay in the low C group—it helped a lot!